

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT, 2012
MAURITIUS COUNTRY NARRATIVE
(TIER 1)**



Mauritius is a source country for children and, to a much lesser extent, men and women subjected to sex trafficking primarily, but also to forced labor. Secondary school-age girls and, in fewer numbers, younger girls from all areas of the country, including from Rodrigues Island, are induced into prostitution, often by their peers, family members, or by businessmen offering other forms of employment. Girls are also sometimes sold into prostitution by a family member or forced into the sex trade in exchange for food and shelter. Taxi drivers provide transportation and introductions for both the girls and the clients. Girls and boys whose mothers engage in prostitution are reportedly vulnerable to being forced into prostitution at a young age. Some women addicted to drugs are forced into prostitution by their boyfriends, who act as their pimps. In recent years, small numbers of Mauritian adults have been identified as trafficking victims in the United Kingdom, Belgium, and Canada. Mauritius's manufacturing and construction sectors employ approximately 30,000 foreign migrant workers from India, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Madagascar. Although there have been no confirmed cases to date of workers subjected to conditions of forced labor within Mauritius, some migrant workers have reported passport confiscation, underpayment of wages, substandard living conditions, and threats of deportation. In 2011, Cambodian men were identified as victims of forced labor on a Thai-flagged fishing boat in Mauritius's territorial waters. Malagasy women reportedly transit Mauritius en route to employment as domestic workers in Lebanon, where some were subsequently subjected to conditions of forced labor.

The Government of Mauritius fully complies with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Mauritius sustained its efforts to identify, investigate, and prosecute human trafficking offenses during the reporting period. In 2011, the government investigated 14 cases of child trafficking and convicted six trafficking offenders, an increase over the previous year. The government augmented its funding for victim services, identified and cared for seven victims of child prostitution, and rescued and repatriated 24 Cambodian forced labor victims. The Mauritius police force maintained its anti-trafficking training programs for police officers and continued its awareness campaigns in schools and villages. The government's efforts to communicate with and coordinate among all relevant ministries, however, remained lacking, leading to inconsistent provision of protective and investigative services to trafficking victims. Although the government sought to address proactively the exploitation of children in prostitution, it made no similar effort to investigate or address the forced prostitution of women.

Recommendations for Mauritius: Utilize anti-trafficking legislation to investigate and prosecute trafficking offenses and convict and punish trafficking offenders, including in cases involving adult women exploited in forced prostitution; designate an official coordinating body or mechanism to facilitate improved anti-trafficking communication and coordination among the relevant ministries, law enforcement entities, working groups, and NGOs; establish procedures to guide officials in the proactive identification of victims of trafficking among at-risk populations; provide increased funding and support to all branches of the Minors Brigade in the investigation of human trafficking cases; provide anti-trafficking training to personnel of the police prosecution office to improve the timeliness in deciding whether to prosecute

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT, 2012
MAURITIUS COUNTRY NARRATIVE
(TIER 1)**



trafficking cases; and ensure that all cases of children in prostitution identified by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development, and Family Welfare's (MOGE) Child Development Unit (CDU) are referred to the police for investigation.

Prosecution

The Mauritian government augmented its anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts during the reporting period, investigating an increased number of child trafficking cases and achieving six convictions, compared with none in 2010. The Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act of 2009 prohibits all forms of trafficking of adults and children and prescribes penalties of up to 15 years' imprisonment for convicted offenders. In addition, the Child Protection Act of 2005 prohibits all forms of child trafficking and prescribes punishment of up to 15 years' imprisonment; the Judicial Provisions Act of 2008 increased the maximum prescribed punishment for child trafficking offenses to 30 years' imprisonment. All of the aforementioned penalties are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape.

From arrest to sentencing of offenders, cases of child trafficking typically took 18 to 24 months to resolve; a lack of anti-trafficking training among officials in the police prosecution office often created backlogs when determining whether to prosecute a trafficking case. The MOGE reported the government's investigation of 14 cases of child trafficking in 2011. The Mauritian police reported its investigation of 12 child sex trafficking cases involving 15 suspects during the reporting period, including one case involving three suspects in early 2012, and its referral of 11 cases to the director of public prosecution for trial in 2011. The government secured six convictions in 2011 under Article 14-1 (Causing a child to be sexually abused) of the Child Protection Act and Articles 253 (Procuring prostitutes) and 90 (Brothel keeping) of the Criminal Code Amendment Act of 1998, with punishments ranging from small fines to 10 years' imprisonment with hard labor; one convicted trafficking offender received a suspended sentence pending the completion of 250 hours of community service. In July 2011, the government convicted one man and one woman under Article 14-1(c) of the Child Protection Act for causing a child to engage in prostitution, sentencing them to 10 years' imprisonment with hard labor. The Minors Brigade of the Mauritian police force maintained a database of all trafficking incidents involving minors. A local NGO provided training for 70 government officials on commercial sexual exploitation of children and the police training school provided training to 300 new police recruits on trafficking in persons. There was no evidence of government officials' involvement in human trafficking during the reporting period.

Protection

The government sustained protection of child trafficking victims during the reporting period and dedicated significant financial resources to expanding existing assistance options. The Minors Brigade systematically referred all cases of identified children in prostitution to the CDU for assistance. CDU

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT, 2012
MAURITIUS COUNTRY NARRATIVE
(TIER 1)**



officials regularly referred abused and exploited children to organizations running multi-purpose shelters for care. The government also encouraged the placement of trafficking victims in foster homes for long-term shelter. Victims received medical and psychological assistance regardless of whether they resided in a shelter, in foster care, or with relatives. In 2011, the MOGE provided the equivalent of \$89,965 to fund the operation of an NGO-run drop-in center for sexually abused children – a 246 percent increase over 2010 funding – that provided counseling to girls engaged in prostitution and advertised its services through a toll-free number and community outreach. The center counseled seven victims of child prostitution during the reporting period. In 2011, the MOGE broke ground on the construction of a residential center at Grande Riviere North West – at a cost equivalent to \$804,195 – to provide care for victims of child prostitution; it is expected to be operational by June 2012.

In July 2011, Mauritian maritime authorities intercepted a Thai-flagged fishing vessel and rescued 24 Cambodian males, including one child, who claimed to be working in conditions of forced labor. Although the government did not designate the 24 Cambodians as victims of human trafficking or offer them shelter, it facilitated IOM's interviewing of the victims and the Mauritius Immigration Office transported the victims to and provided them assistance at the airport when they were repatriated to Cambodia in the November 2011. Although the government continued to operate a 24-hour hotline for reporting cases of sexual abuse, it received no calls regarding cases of child prostitution or other forms of trafficking in 2011. The government continued to employ a formal protocol on the provision of assistance to all victims of sexual abuse; minors victimized in prostitution were accompanied to the hospital by a child welfare officer, and police worked in conjunction with this officer to obtain statements from the children. Medical treatment and psychological support were readily available at public clinics and NGO-run centers in Mauritius. The government encouraged victims' assistance in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking crimes, and ensured that identified victims were not incarcerated inappropriately, fined, or otherwise penalized solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked.

Prevention

The government made notable efforts to prevent the sex trafficking of children and reduce the demand for commercial sex acts during the year. Communication and coordination among the relevant government ministries, however, was insufficient and hindered effective national partnerships. The police Family Protection Unit and the Minors Brigade continued their widespread public awareness campaigns on child abuse and child rights at schools and community centers that included information on the dangers and consequences of engaging in prostitution. The campaign targeted at-risk regions in the east and south coasts of the island and reached 38,979 persons in 2011, including parents, primary school children, high school students, and civil society members. Members of police units also discussed these topics on three radio programs. Law enforcement and child welfare officials conducted surveillance at bus stops, nightclubs, gaming houses, and other places frequented by children to identify and interact with students

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT, 2012
MAURITIUS COUNTRY NARRATIVE
(TIER 1)**



who were at a high risk of sex trafficking. In order to prevent potential child trafficking between mainland Mauritius and Rodrigues Island, the Passport and Immigration Office required children under the age of 18 to carry a travel document issued by their local police station when traveling between the two islands.

The Ministry of Tourism, Leisure, and External Communications sustained its distribution of pamphlets to hotels and tour operators regarding the responsibility of the tourism sector to combat child sex trafficking. Inspections conducted by the Ministry of Labor's 30 labor officers in 2011 yielded no cases of forced labor or exploitative child labor. The Ministry of Labor's Special Migrant Unit was responsible for vetting contracts, inspecting workplaces, investigating claims of poor working conditions, and following up on worker complaints; it did not provide specific information regarding corrective actions, such as the issuing of notices or fines, taken as a result of such inspections during the reporting period. The unit employed interpreters to facilitate communication between the ministry and foreign workers of every nationality employed in Mauritius. The Occupational Safety and Health (Employees' Lodging Accommodation) Regulations of 2011 establish a minimum standard for lodging and other living conditions provided to migrant workers. In 2011, the government established a lodging accommodation committee to examine companies' applications for lodging permits, as well as a lodging accommodation unit – comprised of officials from the Ministries of Labor and Health and the Fire Services Department – to enforce the regulations. Corrective actions taken by these entities during the reporting period, if any, are unknown. Several Mauritian statutes, including the anti-trafficking act, the Child Protection Act, and the Employment Rights Act of 2008 make provision for criminal punishment for local recruitment agencies who engage in recruitment of workers using fraudulent or deceptive offers; the government did not investigate or shut down any local or foreign recruitment agencies suspected of fraudulent operations in 2011.

(END)